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ABSTRACT

This document reviews the literature from 1949 to the present on psychological effects of husband/father separations and reunifications upon military families. Separations are limited to those that result directly from military duties; divorces, deaths and other permanent separations are not included. The review is organized into two parts, the first examining the psychological effects of husband/father separation and reunification in peacetime and the second examining the same effects during armed conflict (World War II and the Vietnam War). None of the research reviewed related to the Korean War or to any short-term conflicts such as the Grenada and Panama invasions or the recent Persian Gulf War. The research reviewed on peacetime separations suggests that the wife usually experienced an increase in personal problems during the separation and that the children could experience substantial emotional and behavioral difficulties. The literature reviewed on wartime separations included studies of husbands/fathers who were sent into combat, some of whom became prisoners of war (POWs). The research reviewed suggests that exposure to combat increases the likelihood of marital and family problems. For POW families, the literature suggests that length and quality of marriage prior to captivity and the wife's emotional functioning were significantly correlated with how well the family adjusted to reunification. Methodological limitations of the research reviewed are discussed and areas for future research are identified. (NB)

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF HUSBAND/FATHER SEPARATION AND REUNIFICATION IN MILITARY FAMILIES

A Doctoral Research Paper

Presented to

the Faculty of the Rosemead School of Psychology

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Psychology

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by

Keith Edward Clark

June 1991

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF HUSBAND/FATHER SEPARATION AND REUNIFICATION IN MILITARY FAMILIES

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ABSTRACT

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF HUSBAND/FATHER SEPARATION AND REUNIFICATION IN MILITARY FAMILIES

by

Keith Edward Clark

Husband/father separations and reunifications are a fact of life for families in the military. The research literature from 1949 to the present was examined with a view toward conclusions that can be drawn concerning the psychological effects of husband/father separation and reunification on the wife and children. The literature appears to divide itself into two categories: (a) separations during times of peace, and (b) separations during times of war. This latter domain further divides into two subcategories: (a) husbands/fathers who were sent into combat and returned, and (b) husbands/fathers who became POW's. In general, it is apparent that separations and reunifications do engender emotional difficulties for the family members. However, because of the limited number of studies and the nature of the research in terms of design and control, conclusions of a more refined nature cannot be made with any degree of confidence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

DEDICATION v

DOCTORAL RESEARCH PAPER

Introduction 1

Effect of Separation and Reunification on Military Families 3

The Scope and Purpose of This Review 5

Review of the Research Literature on Separations 7

Peace-time Separations 8

War-time Separations 14

Families of Husbands/Fathers Sent into Areas of Conflict 15

Families of Husbands/Fathers Who Become Prisoners of War 17

Summary and Conclusions 25

Conclusions 28

Future Research 32

REFERENCES 34

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my family: to my brothers, Steve, Scott and Eric, who were my constant companions throughout our moves across the country; to my mother, who kept us together through it all; and to my father, who served our country in both Korea and Vietnam, a man of whom I am very proud. Dad, I'm glad you came back.

The Psychological Effects of Husband/Father Separation and Reunification in Military Families

Introduction

Parental and spousal separations are typically seen as disruptions in the family system. There can be a wide variety of causes for separation, such as marital discord, demands of the employment situation, legal internment or extended family demands. Furthermore, it is not only the separation that can be distressful, but reunification also that becomes a challenge (McCubbin & Dahl, 1976). Both parties may have gone through extensive changes within their own subsystems during the separation, bringing possibly new and unforeseen conflicts into the task of reintegration.

In American society, the incidence of father separations in particular has received a great amount of attention in the media and political arenas. Throughout the history of civilization the family has represented the basic unit of societal structure, suggesting that widespread disturbances to this fundamental unit could reverberate throughout and affect the whole of society. The family has become a common and important topic in the media, and efforts have been made to study it in the hope of finding ways to foster its stability and solidarity. Part of this effort may be seen in the history of academic research on the family, including the psychological effects of father separation and reunification on the family system as well as on various

members or subsystems (Biller & Borstelmann, 1967; Longabaugh, 1973; Lynn & Sawrey, 1958; Oshman, 1975; Shinn, 1978).

Research on the effects of father separations has shown that the absence of the the father does impact the development of the children, especially of males. Some of the reported consequences include (a) lower performances on cognitive tests (Shinn, 1978); (b) an increased display of dependency (Tiller, 1958; Lynn & Sawrey, 1958); (c) so-called "feminine" features in males, such as a cognitive pattern of verbal ability being higher than mathematical ability (Carlsmith,1973), and in the use of semantics (Longabaugh, 1973); (d) lower scores on scales that measure ego strength (Oshman, 1975); (e) feelings of sadness and depression (Rosenfeld, Rosenstein & Raab, 1973), and (f) a retardation in the development of masculinity in males (Biller & Borstelmann, 1967), including significantly lowered aggression (Bach, 1946).

In her review of the father absence literature, Hillenbrand (1976) showed that research findings are not consistent enough to state definitively that father absence directly produces maladjustment, though the correlation between them is fairly strong. On the other hand, there are some studies that have shown how father absence is associated with certain adaptive effects. In another comprehensive review of the literature, Shinn (1978) suggested that future research should be aimed at separating out differential effects, such as age of onset, duration and type of absence. With a more refined approach to the phenomenon, more could be discovered as to the specific

conditions associated with both adaptive and maladaptive functioning in father-absent children.

Effect of Separation and Reunification on Military Families

The issue of father separation and reunification becomes even more critical when military families are taken into consideration. In all four branches of service, almost every family will experience some type of parent/spouse separation as a matter of course. In the majority of cases, it is the father/husband who is consigned to be separated from his family for a certain length of time, though it should not be overlooked that an increasing number of mothers/wives are enlisting in the services as well. These separations may be the result of field training exercises, attendance at special schools, special assignments, regular duties (e.g., Naval personnel assigned aboard submarines), or armed conflicts. Separations can last from a few days to over a year, and even indefinitely in the case of prisoners of war (POW's) and soldiers missing in action (MIA's). They can vary in frequency from three year-long tours in a twenty year career to a consistent cycle for naval personnel of six months in port, six months out at sea. Since parental/spouse separations are endemic to the military lifestyle, and the general research literature suggests a strong correlation between father absence and the development of the children, it seems likely that there would be a high degree of interest in the study of this relationship.

However, this has not always been the case, according to many of the investigators who have been involved in the study of the military family (e.g., Bowen, 1985; Kohen, 1984; Lagrone, 1978, 1979; Long,

1986; McCubbin & Dahl, 1976; McNelis & Awalt, 1986; Rodriguez, 1980; Segal, 1986). The main focus of the military is to recruit, enlist and develop men and women into personnel capable of defending the United States as well as outside its continental limits. Historically, this focus had been so emphasized that the effects on families of personnel were of little concern to the military bureaucracy. Such an attitude was often adopted by the husband/fathers themselves, who would subsequently become unresponsive to the needs of their families, primarily because family needs were viewed as secondary to the needs and wants of the military. Since the 1960s, however, there has been an increasing interest within the armed forces in the relationship between the quality of family life and the ability of military personnel to perform their duties effectively and efficiently. Other factors, such as the rise in concern for human welfare also contributed to change. As a result, the military has shown over the years increasing concern for the plight of the families and how best to serve their needs by (a) supporting research and research centers (e.g., Military Family Resource Center, Springfield, Virginia, and the Naval Research Center, San Diego, California); (b) creating and promoting intervention and treatment of family problems (e.g., Project SAFE); and (c) increasing the awareness in the military community about such social and familial problems as alcoholism and child abuse. Overall, it seems that the armed services have made a substantial amount of progress in the past three decades in developing a more sympathetic posture towards the needs of military families.

career choice, it is not assumed that implications drawn from this body of literature can be applied in situations where it is the military mother who is separated from the family. The vast majority of studies examined husband/father-separated families, though some of the research more recently has begun to include wife/mother separation as a distinct variable (cf. Kulka et al., 1990). As a result of the greater participation of women in the 1991 Desert Storm operations in Iraq and the Persian Gulf, it is likely that there will be an increase of studies on the effects of mother/wife separations.

Different types and durations of husband/father separations are included in the present review. Separations are limited to those that are the direct result of the serviceman's duties, as opposed to such other factors as divorce, marital strife or financial hardships. The term "husband/father absence" will be used interchangeably with "husband/father separation," and all such absences/separations are coupled with the idea of an eventual return and reunion/repatriation. Deaths and other permanent separations are not included in the scope of the review.

Investigation of the effects of husband/father separations in military families began in earnest during and following World War II. However, the literature is composed of studies ranging from theoretical proposals and personal reflections by physicians, who had had a lengthy amount of contact with military families, to case studies and more controlled research studies which included the use of standardized measurement and comparison groups. This review is limited to studies which utilized statistical methods of analysis in

reporting data. Such methods range from simple reports of percentages to correlational analyses and tests of significance. Types of research have included true and quasi-experimental design studies as well as case studies, the latter when the authors of case studies have utilized some sort of statistical approach in evaluating their findings. By using this approach, the results of the various research articles could be compared with each other in some sort of coherent manner. An integration of some of these results is attempted at the end of this paper. Since such restrictive parameters have excluded a substantial amount of the literature, the time frame for the article survey extends from the World War II era to the present. However, the parameters were also broad enough that such diverse types of research would be included, making the the process of integrating the results a challenging one. To facilitate the flow of the paper, the focus is primarily on the results of the studies, as opposed to their design and methodology. Because of the variety of types of methodology used, only a select few studies are examined in detail. Further, because many of the studies utilized a research design (e.g., surveys and correlational studies) that disallows the drawing of definitive cause-and-effect relationships, the conclusions of these studies are necessarily presented as tentative.

Review of the Research Literature on Separations

As a way of organizing the data, two main groupings will be utilized: (a) the psychological effects of husband/father separation and reunification in peacetime, and (b) the same effects during or as the

result of armed conflict (i.e., World War II and the Vietnam War) It should be noted that none of the research reviewed was connected with the Korean War, or any short-term conflicts, such as the Grenada and Panama invasions, or the recent Persian Gulf War. The justification for this splitting of the literature review is that war-time separations include the added factor of increased possibility of physical/psychological harm or death to the husband/father, with substantial effect upon the experience and course of separation and reunification of the family. Furthermore, this second group of separations during times of armed conflict comprises (a) families in which the husband/father was sent into and returned from combat, and (b) families in which the husband/father became a prisoner of war (POW).

Peacetime Separations

A consistent finding from research examining peacetime separations was that the wife usually experienced an increase in personal problems and difficulties in sustaining the functioning of the family system (Decker, 1978; Marsella, Dubanoski, & Mohs, 1974). In respect to personal problems, depressive affect was commonly found to be present, often at clinical levels (Beckman, Marsella, & Finney, 1979; Decker, 1978; Nice, 1983; Snyder, 1978). Depression was usually associated with complaints of loneliness and lack of companionship (Decker, 1978; Snyder, 1978). There was also an increase in reported physical complications and medical visits while the husbands were absent (Snyder, 1978). Though it had been suggested that critical periods of severe depression may ensue during

the separation (Montalvo, 1976), one investigator found that the course of depression during deployment was basically linear, that is, rather than there being an alteration of affective highs and lows, the level of depression for these subjects remained consistent throughout the separation period (Nice, 1983).

Nice's (1983) study is more fully outlined here because it is one of the better designed studies in the literature on military husband/father separation and reunification. Nice's sample consisted of both separation and control groups, each composed of wives of personnel stationed aboard naval vessels. In the separation wives group (n = 31), the husbands were deployed for a seven-month period, while the husbands in the control wives group (n = 20) remained in port. The type of ship was similar (amphibious assault ships). The results of analysis of demographic data of subjects in each group showed negligible differences. The instrument used was the Depression scale of the 40-item Mood Questionnaire. Internal reliability of the depression scale on the sample population yielded a coefficient of .91.

Each subject was given a seven-month supply of predated Mood Questionnaires to be filled out on a biweekly basis, starting two weeks prior to the husband's departure, and ending two weeks after the return of the husbands of wives in the separation group. Subsequent analysis demonstrated that wives in the separation group had significantly higher depressive scores than wives in the control group in the preseparation ($p < .001$) and separation ($p < .01$) phases. In the post-separation phase however, depressive scores were significantly

reversed. The control group achieved depressive scores that were significantly higher than the separation group ($p < .05$). It may have been that the return of one squadron of ships signaled the imminent departure of their "sister ships" in another squadron. In anticipation of the departure of their husbands, the wives in the control group experienced depressive affect, while wives in the separation group, now reunited with their husbands, had lowered depression scores.

It was hypothesized that the more separations wives encounter, the more they learn how to cope with them (MacIntosh, 1968). However, this idea was not supported in a later study (Nice, 1983), which it was found that age proved to be the only significant factor in predicting how well the wife copes during the separation. It was concluded that increased coping ability was more a function of the subject's maturity than of the number of separations the wife had experienced. This was further corroborated in another study (Decker, 1978) in which the wives stated in their self-reports that their ability to cope actually decreased with time as more separations were experienced. Though depression was found to have decreased with the reunification of the husband and wife (Nice, 1983), in some areas of family functioning problems actually increased with the serviceman's return (Marsella, Dubanoski, & Mohs, 1974). Complications tended to fall into two main groupings: (a) an increase in maternal dominance and control over the children, and (b) an increase in marital dissatisfaction and discord. Both developments were tentatively interpreted as ways in which the wives communicated

to the husbands their hurt feelings and anger over his having "abandoned" her as a result of his deployment.

The literature has surfaced some interesting findings concerning the manner in which wives would go about coping with their problems during the husband's absence. Wives were reported as often looking to themselves and their children for support as the means of making it through the difficult times, a sort of "closing of ranks" by remaining family members (Decker, 1978; Montalvo, 1976; Snyder, 1978). If outside resources were pursued, higher stressed families tended to utilize those provided by the military. On the other hand, moderately stressed families often utilized civilian agencies and/or relatives, contingent on whether such resources were readily accessible to the family, as was (and is) not always the case in many military communities (Montalvo, 1976; Snyder, 1978). In fact, the military system was often bypassed by the suffering families because of its perceived insensitivity to family issues and the complicated bureaucracy often encountered in requesting help (Beckman, Marsella, & Finney, 1979; Montalvo, 1976). The lower the paygrade of the husband, the more likely it was that the military institution was made the target of the wife's anger (Decker, 1978). Higher paygrade, on the other hand, was correlated with a higher level of functioning (Decker, 1978; Montalvo, 1976), though this was not found to be true in a later study (Nice, 1983).

The children of father-separated families also seemed to have been affected negatively. Of 100 families studied, 66 indicated that their children experienced difficulties while the father was absent

(Yeatman, 1981). Some of the most common problems encountered were (a) discipline problems (34%); (b) somatic complaints (28%); (c) phobias (19%), especially the fear of darkness; (d) lowered self-esteem/increased insecurity (13%); and (e) a drop in school grades (11%). In another study (Decker, 1978) high percentages of problem behavior were also found in a different population of children, including: (a) aggressive behavior (76%); (b) expressions of sadness, depression and frequent crying (71%); and (c) the child's resentment towards his father's absence (68%). Some of the lower percentages included a drop in school performance and grades (18%), delinquent behavior (7%) and truancy (4%). In the two studies, problems with school performance yielded similar percentages, though one group reported greater problems with self-esteem and depression than the other. This assumes that "lowered self esteem/increased insecurity" and "expressions of sadness, depression and frequent crying" have similar dynamics. However, it should be noted that Yeatman's (1981) study was based on retrospections by the parents, while the data of Decker's (1978) study was collected from the wives during the separation period, thereby possibly inflating perceptions of their child's emotional difficulties because of the wife's own struggle in contending with the separation. Reports on the child's school performance were based upon actual school grades rather than upon subjective assessments by the parents. This could account for the similarity of percentages across studies for this factor.

In comparison with boys from non-separated families, boys whose fathers were absent from the home had a more difficult time

functioning in their world (Pedersen, 1966), especially in the areas of social relations and staying focused on real world demands (i.e., they spent too much time daydreaming). In Pedersen's study, the age of the child at time of absence and the number of times the father had been separated from the family did not have an effect upon the severity of maladjustment. However, mothers of father-separated children were also significantly more disturbed than mothers of father-present children, based on an analysis of MMPI scores. The fathers of the two groups, however, did not differ in their MMPI scores. Since this was a correlational study, the investigator pointed out that it is impossible to deduce whether the mother or the child was the first to become disturbed.

Hillenbrand's (1976) study suggested that father absence leads to increased aggression, irritability, depression and impulsiveness in boys, while girls may have decreased quantitative abilities, especially if the absence occurred at an early age. Maternal dominance was also correlated with increased verbal and global IQs and quantitative abilities for boys, and decreased displays of aggression and dependency in girls. Longabaugh (1973) also found significant interactions between the mother's behavior and her child's performance on tests. Hillenbrand (1976) found with her subjects that girls with older sisters displayed increased impulsiveness, aggression, dependency and negative self-image, while boys showed a differential effect of their behavior depending on the gender of their older sibling. That is, if the older sibling was a sister, the younger boy showed an increase in aggressiveness and striving for achievement.

However, if he had an older brother, the younger boy's IQ score tended to increase. Hillenbrand (1976) concluded that in terms of effects, father absence appears to be less critical for girls than for boys.

In summary, it appears that wives of military personnel do experience an increase in personal problems while they are separated from their husbands. At least for the wives of Navy personnel, their depression remains at a constant level of intensity throughout the separation period. Upon the husband's return, the depression decreases, though there can be a concurrent increase in other family and marital conflicts. In coping with the difficulties of the husband/father separation, families often "close ranks" and look to each other for support as opposed to reaching out to external resources. The research literature suggests that children also experience substantial emotional and behavioral difficulties during the absence of their fathers. There is evidence that there are differential effects upon the children depending on their gender, birth order and the gender of their siblings. However, the research to support this hypothesis is not conclusive.

Wartime Separations

Separations during times of war include additional factors compounding the effects of separation and reunification. Some of the factors include (a) the returning veteran suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of combat exposure, and (b) the husband/father becoming a prisoner of war (POW) or missing in action (MIA). In such cases, the separation is one that may be of indefinite length.

Families of Husbands/Fathers Sent into Areas of Conflict. Borus (1973) found that the effect of wartime separations on the marital relationship was related to how the returning veteran negotiated his own adjustment at home. Veterans who experienced legal and disciplinary troubles had maladjusted marital relations as well, while those who experienced emotional problems were avoidant and withdrew from relationships altogether. Kulka et al. (1990) found differences between servicemen who were sent into combat and their peers who were not exposed to combat conditions. Both the marriage relationship and the family system experienced a significant amount of difficulty during the veteran's readjustment (Kulka et al., 1990; Stoltz, 1954). Families in which the father was diagnosed as suffering from PTSD experienced more divorce, marital problems, and difficulties in family adjustment than families of veterans who did not experience combat trauma during their tour of duty (Kulka, 1990). Wives felt an increase in helplessness when their husbands were assigned to combat zones, which kept them from utilizing military and social resources that were available to them (Macintosh, 1968). Wives also experienced problems with weight gain (Matsakis, 1988).

Children whose fathers were sent into combat experienced greater stress during their father's absence than those whose fathers were sent into non-combat conditions, according to reports by their parents (Hillenbrand, 1976). Children also experienced more physical abuse at the hands of their repatriated fathers than did civilian children (Matsakis, 1988). Boys whose fathers were sent into combat developed stronger verbal skills than children who did not suffer any

separation. In contrast to boys of non-separated families, boys whose fathers were in combat also exhibited less of a striving for power and prestige, and were more willing to remain in school longer in order to receive more training before entering into the professional world (Carlsmith, 1973). According to the author, these boys were more likely to pursue what were described as "feminine" vocations (e.g., social worker, public administrator, psychologist) rather than "masculine" ones (e.g., physician, mathematician, salesman, chemist). While the present author does not endorse the assigning of such sexist adjectives as "feminine" and "masculine" to vocations that a properly trained person of either gender can competently fulfill, this clustering of vocations found by Carlsmith does suggest that there may have been some dynamic being expressed by those subjects who experienced a war-time separation. Perhaps a better pair of descriptors for these vocation clusters would be "people-oriented" and "object-oriented."

Children who were born while their father was in combat experienced a significant amount of alienation in their relationship with their fathers after his return (Stoltz, 1954). They had difficulty in relating to adult authority figures, in that they were both compulsively obedient and openly defiant with the adult. Their play was more aggressive, they seemed highly anxious in social conflicts, they were less able to maintain a give-and-take relationship with their peers, while at the same time they were exhibiting good ability to show sympathy towards others (Stoltz, 1954). There was no consistent evidence that boys and girls reacted to combat separations in demonstrably different ways (Stoltz, 1954).

According to Hill (1949), families in which the father/husband was sent into combat successfully negotiated the crisis in one of two ways: (a) by including the father/husband in family decisions (e.g., through writing to him and thereby mentally maintaining his presence in the family), or (b) by excluding him ("closing ranks"). However, upon the father/husband's return, the former family style of coping made it much easier for such families to deal with the adjustment of reunification in comparison to families who utilized the "closing ranks" approach. How a family responds to the crisis of separation seems to depend on three main factors: (a) the wife's perception of the stress, (b) the hardships that were endured, and (c) the internal and external resources of the family (Hill, 1949).

Families of Husbands/Fathers Who Become Prisoners of War. As mentioned earlier, families in which the father/husband has become a prisoner of war (POW) are exposed to more severe stressors than non-POW families (e.g., longer separations of indefinite length, concerns about his treatment by the father's captors). There is a small body of fairly well designed research studies that have specifically investigated these families' experience of such prolonged separations.

McCubbin, Dahl, Lester, Benson, & Robertson (1976) suggested that there are at least six patterns of coping which families of POWs utilized during the separation:

1. Seeking resolution and expression of feelings (e.g., seeking out father/husband's status, actively dealing with and confronting the military in order to obtain such information, relating with other wives of POWs).

2. Maintaining family integration (e.g., investing in a home, having family activities, investing in the children's future).

3. Establishing autonomy while maintaining family ties (e.g., wives gaining employment, low dependency on medications or the military, living near relatives, planning on a future that includes the father/husband).

4. Reducing anxiety (e.g., self-punishment, increase in smoking and alcohol consumption, crying and withdrawal).

5. Establishing independence via self-development (e.g., education, learning new skills, making financial investments, engaging in self-expressive activities).

6. Maintaining the past/dependence on religion (e.g., reliving the past, high involvement in religious activities, remaining a part of the military, no show of fear, or trying to establish a new life).

Out of these six coping styles, Patterns 4 (reducing anxiety) and 6 (maintaining the past/ dependence on religion) were considered to be potentially dysfunctional ways of dealing with the stress of a prolonged absence. In addition, McCubbin et al. (1976) cited certain factors in the history of the marital relationship which played a role in which coping style the wife chose to employ:

1. Seeking resolution and expression of feelings -- satisfactory marital relationship prior to separation, minimal marital conflict, wife beyond child bearing years.

2. Maintaining family integration -- husband has a limited amount of education and volunteered for combat duty.

3. Establishing autonomy while maintaining family ties -- the possibility of a prolonged separation was not discussed, legal problems are encountered during the separation.

4. Reducing anxiety -- low amount of satisfaction with marital relationship prior to separation, manifest symptoms of stress and tension during the separation.

5. Establishing independence via self-development -- husband has a limited amount of education and volunteered for combat duty.

6. Maintaining the past/dependence on religion -- low amount of experience with the military as a child, high amount of expression of acceptance and understanding of husband's involvement with the conflict, the possibility of a prolonged separation was discussed beforehand, difficulties in parenting the children.

In general, the existence of these coping styles (McCubbin et al., 1976) coincide with Hill's (1949) conclusions in regard to family adaptation to war-induced separations, though admittedly his study did not include POWs. That is, the manner in which a family responds to the crisis of separation is a function of three factors: (a) the wife's perception of the stress, (b) the hardships that are endured, and (c) the resources of the family.

Overall, wives can experience a considerable amount of difficulties during their husband's absence. Among one group of wives of POWs, 72.3% reported lack of companionship as a major problem in their adjustment. Other reported stressors included feelings of extreme loneliness (48.2%), having to make decisions alone (39.8%) and lack of suitable social outlets (27.7%) (McCubbin, Hunter, &

Metres, 1974). There were also reported increases in smoking (32.9% of population) and drinking (23.8%). Thirty-one percent of the women had or were receiving psychological treatment, while an additional 51.4% were assessed by the investigators as needing treatment. Perceptions of the marriage.relationship shifted considerably from times prior to the separation (79.9% reported perceiving their relationship with their husband as satisfactory) to the time of the survey during the separation (44.2% reported a satisfactory perception, a drop of 35.7 percentage points). It was also found that the length of the marriage prior to separation and the length of the separation were correlated significantly with the wife's satisfaction with the marital relationship.

Following the repatriation of the POW and return to his household, these families were again assessed in order to determine significant predictors of adjustment to the POW's return and reintegration into the family matrix (McCubbin, Dahl, Lester, & Ross, 1975). Of the various background variables examined, three factors stood out above the others: (a) length of marriage prior to the captivity, (b) the quality of marriage prior to captivity, and (c) the degree of the wife's emotional dysfunction.

Nice, McDonald, and McMillian (1981) conducted an even later follow-up study in order to learn more about families of POWs. Compared to a matched group of military families who had not experienced a prolonged separation, the families of the repatriated POWs (RPOWs) experienced significantly more divorce, with the majority of the divorces occurring within the first year of reunification.

Patterns of family interactions were also studied and compared between intact RPOW families and those RPOW families that had experienced a divorce, though no differences were found. This suggests that problems associated with adjustments in family interactions were resolved and did not resurface, at least within the first six years of reunification, which was the scope of the Nice et al. (1981) follow-up study. It was also found that the family interaction style for both the RPOW families and the comparison group could be described as structure-oriented. Structure-oriented families are characterized by such features as (a) high cohesion, (b) a high moral-religious emphasis, (c) good organization, and (d) a minimal amount of conflict. The investigators commented that such an organizational style would maximally facilitate the use of a family's coping resources. It was also determined that those families most at risk for encountering problems in family functioning were those that experienced longer separations, had few or no children, and were non-Catholic.

Personality characteristics of the wife were also examined in order to determine qualities, if any, that were linked with good coping strategies (Boss, 1980). It was found that "psychological father presence" (PFP), defined as the practice of keeping the husband/father a part of the family system while he is absent, specifically by not having the wife take over his functions, was a better predictor of how well the wife coped, as opposed to merely measuring the degree of androgynous qualities the wife possessed. That is, the higher the amount of PFP, the lower the functioning of the wife.

Furthermore, it was found that the wife's instrumental personal qualities (i.e., her ability to assume traditionally male-oriented family roles) had a more positive correlation with her functioning in comparison with the possession of inter- and intrapersonal qualities that are usually associated with males (i.e., androgyny). This research suggests that how a wife reacts emotionally to her husband's captivity is not as important as how she actively negotiates the role adjustments caused by his absence.

The children of POW's also appeared to have experienced difficulties during their father's prolonged absence. In one survey of such children (McCubbin, Hunter, & Dahl, 1975), problems reported by the mother included excessive crying (14% of all children surveyed), nightmares (13%), rebelliousness (11.5%), shyness (10.7%), nail-biting (10.2%), behavior problems at school (9.6%), and difficulties with peer relations (9.1%). In general, 25% of all children (N = 405) were assessed by the investigating team as in need of psychological treatment, though only 9% of the subjects were receiving or had received any professional help. However, because a comparison group was not used, it cannot be determined whether or not these children were experiencing a significantly greater number of problems than other child populations. Within the scope of the military family research literature, the results of another study (Decker, 1978) could be used as a comparison with military children who had experienced a non-combat separation. However, due to the type of questions asked and the manner in which they were queried, only one meaningful comparison can be made, namely Decker's (1978)

"truancy" (4%) and McCubbin, Hunter, and Dahl's (1975) "behavior problems at school" (9.6%). But even here, the comparison is not a strong one, because the scope of McCubbin and associates' question is broader than that of Decker's. Another investigator (Hillenbrand, 1976) hypothesized that children whose fathers were on combat tours of duty experienced greater stress during the separation than children of fathers who were involved in non-combat deployments.

A more controlled study by McCubbin and Dahl (1976) showed that there were some significant differences in children of RPOW's in comparison to a standardized population. The children were drawn from a representative sample of 100 families of prisoners of war that were originally interviewed in 1972 by the Center of Prisoner of War Studies. The criterion for family selection consisted of (a) the father was taken prisoner during the Vietnam War, (b) the family had at least one child, and (c) the father had returned. This yielded a total of 43 children eligible as subjects for the study. All of the children were tested within a ten-month period, approximately 12 to 22 months after the father's return.

The measure used in McCubbin and Dahl's (1976) study was the California Test of Personality (CTP) because of its reported reliability and validity, appropriateness for a wide range of ages, and organization around life adjustment. The construct of life adjustment was divided into two domains: personal and social adjustment. The results demonstrated that the children of RPOW's achieved scores that were significantly below the mean of the standardized test population in both personal adjustment ($p < .005$) and social adjustment ($p < .005$).

Both adjustment constructs were then broken down into sub-parts, further detailing the areas of maladjustment in children of RPOW's. In the personal adjustment domain, scores that were significantly below the mean included such specific areas as "sense of personal freedom" and "freedom from withdrawal tendencies." In the realm of social adjustment, the significant areas were "freedom from antisocial tendencies," "family relations," "school relations," and "community relations." All differences in scores were at the $p < .005$ level of significance. A weakness in this study, however, was a lack of pre-separation data with which to make comparisons. Also, given the stresses that are endemic to living in the military system, normative data that specifically utilized a military population would have perhaps been more appropriate. Because this study utilized only a post-measure design, conclusions of causation have to be drawn tentatively.

In summary, both types of separations (combat and captivity) espoused psychological difficulties for the wife and the children. The research does indicate that exposure to combat increases the likelihood of marital and family problems in comparison to military families whose husband/father is not exposed to combat conditions. For families who experienced prolonged husband/father separation due to captivity, at least six coping styles were identified. Three factors (length of marriage prior to captivity, quality of marriage prior to captivity, the degree of the wife's emotional dysfunction) were significantly correlated with how well the family adjusted to the reunification with the husband/father. The first year of the RPOW's return appeared to have been a critical period for marital adjustment.

The studies also suggest that the more active the wife was in response to the difficulties caused by the prolonged separation, the better she and the family were able to cope.

Summary and Conclusions

The research-based literature that has focused on the effects of husband/father separations in military families was reviewed in two general groups: (a) separations occurring during peacetime, and (b) separations in which the husband/father was exposed to combat situations. In this latter condition, the literature has further discriminated between (a) families in which the husband/father was exposed to combat and (b) families in which the husband/father was a POW.

In the first condition, it was found that a high percentage of wives reported experiencing various types of discomfort (e.g., loneliness, somatic problems). Depression was also specified and often found at clinical levels. There were mixed accounts as to whether the course of problems progressed in a linear fashion, or was punctuated by a series of critical periods. The ability to cope appeared to be more a function of personal maturity than of the number of times separations were experienced. While depression in the wife decreased upon the husband's return, new problems arose, specifically in the areas of child rearing and the marital relationship. Depending on the level of stress, families looked for assistance from the military (in cases of high stress), or to other sources, especially their own personal resources (in cases of moderate stress). This inward focus

was described as a "closing of ranks." As for the children of such families, there were reports of both moderately high to high percentages of children who had experienced difficulties during the father's absence. There were also reports of significant increases in children of such behaviors as aggression, depression and impulsiveness. Birth order was found to have had a differential effect, as well as gender, in that boys had a more pronounced reaction to the separation than girls.

Wives whose husbands were exposed to combat conditions also reported experiencing such problems as weight gain or dissatisfaction with the marital relationship upon the veteran's return and during the time of readjustment. Families in which the veteran was diagnosed as suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder experienced more divorce, and marital and family difficulties than families in which the father had also been exposed to combat conditions but did not have a traumatized reaction to the conflict. The intellectual development and vocational choices of some children was correlated with the fact that they were separated from their father during times of war. There were difficulties in the father-child relationship, especially if the child had been born while the father was absent. Unlike the evidence found in peacetime separations, there were no significant gender differences in terms of behavior or emotional make-up. Two family coping styles were found that seemed to have led toward a successful negotiation of the the separation crisis: (a) a "closing of ranks," and (b) an attempt to include the father in the family decision process. However, families that utilized the "closing of ranks" style of coping experienced a

higher degree of difficulty during the time of the veteran's reintegration to family life.

With families in which the husband/father was a POW, there were as many as six coping patterns. Two of these patterns are associated with dysfunctional family systems. A high percentage of wives reported experiencing a number of emotional problems. Specifically, perceptions of satisfaction with their marital relationship became more negative during the separation. In one follow-up study, three factors were associated with reintegration outcome: (a) length of the marriage prior to captivity, (b) quality of the marriage prior to captivity, and (c) the level of the wife's emotional dysfunction. With the latter factor, a negative relationship was found, suggesting that there may be an optimal level of dysfunction that the wife needs to experience in order to deal successfully with the prolonged separation. A later follow-up study on families of repatriated POW's showed three variables associated with problems in family functioning: (a) a long separation period, (b) few or no children, and (c) non-Catholic. Wives who tried to retain the husband/father's place in the family during his captivity by not taking over his family roles (a process generally referred to as "psychological father presence") were found as well to have experienced a high degree of dysfunction. Wives who displayed "functional personal qualities" by taking on active family roles, achieved higher functional ratings. As for the children, a moderately high percentage were assessed by the investigators as having need of professional treatment. On a test of personality

adjustment, these children achieved significantly lower scores than those of the standardized group.

Conclusions. Before the conclusions are presented, some methodological limitations should be noted. First, the research literature reviewed has utilized a wide variety of methodologies in gathering and analyzing data. Even with such relatively broad criteria for inclusion, the number of studies reviewed totalled only 20. Conclusions drawn from such a limited literature base should be considered as tentative and inchoate. They should be held tenuously until further research has enlarged the literature base and more complete data and findings can be used to validate or modify the conclusions derived from the extant studies.

Another important consideration is that the research spans several decades and two principal wars, World War II and the Vietnam conflict. Within this time frame, there have been vast changes in the social environment of the United States, particularly through the 1960s. Such changes affect not only the responses of subjects (e.g., in respect to family and sex roles), but also the nature of research questions investigated (see Carlsmith, 1973). Also, the two wars were regarded quite differently in the perceptions of the American people. World War II was seen generally as a legitimate response to a real threat to national security, while the Vietnam conflict was seen by many as a politically motivated venture. As a consequence, the Vietnam conflict became very unpopular with Americans. Such differences may have had a major effect on military families in terms of their coping with husband/father separations.

Finally, it should be noted that a variety of sub-populations exist within the military community, among them submariners, Navy pilots, army or marine infantry and officers. There may be significant differences between families in regard to the type of duty the father performs. The "military family" is a very heterogeneous term, in which such differences may play a role in how a family deals with separation.

In all three groups (peacetime separation, separations involving combat duty, or separations because of capture), there were moderately high to high percentages of the populations, including both wives and children, in which some type of emotional/personal problem was reported. While high percentages are not in themselves conclusive, they suggest nevertheless that there is something worthy of investigation. Unfortunately, the research literature is impoverished in respect to direct comparisons between military and civilian populations (Cantwell, 1974). While there have been several comparative studies involving separated and non-separated populations within the military community, many did not use standardized assessment packages (making comparisons with future research very difficult) or did not control for alpha when employing multiple analyses of the data. Therefore, many of the conclusions found in the literature cannot be cross-validated. There are so many methodological issues at stake that the validity of these studies can at best be held as tentative, specifically conclusions that comment on gender differences, birth order, and age at time of separation.

Some of the more substantive findings are those derived from the Kulka et al. (1990) research, findings which can be respected for the rigor of the study's methodology. Most notable are the significant differences that were found in marital and family relations between PTSD and non-PTSD veterans, and between veterans who were exposed to high-levels of combat and servicemen who were not exposed to combat conditions at all. The latter conclusion gives validity to the organization of the present review, which is based on the hypothesis that there are differences in family function in respect to the type of separation.

Overall, the literature on the POW families is more cohesive in its findings. This is possibly due to the fact that (a) a small group of investigators were connected in one way or another with almost all of the research, (b) the same general pool of subjects was used in many of the studies, (c) some were follow-up studies of previous work, and (d) adequate research methods were employed in the gathering and analyzing of data. An underlying theme that emerges from the body of relevant literature is that those families that took a pro-active stance toward their situation tended to fare better both during and following the separation period than those that took a passive stance. This can be substantiated by the fact that the two family coping patterns from the McCubbin et al. (1976) study that were highly associated with dysfunction seem to have passive characteristics (e.g., withdrawal, self-medication, reliving the past, dependence on the military, failure to establish a new life) in comparison to the other coping patterns. Furthermore, psychological father presence (PFP) was found to be

related to the wife's dysfunction and also employs passive mechanisms. On the other hand, instrumental personal qualities, that is, the willingness and ability to take on active family roles, are more proactive and were positively associated with better functioning. In addition, it was found that wives who experienced some degree of emotional turmoil coped better during the separation period than those who denied experiencing any difficulties. Hill (1949) asserted that family functioning during combat separation is based on three general factors: (a) the wife's perception of the stress, (b) the hardships that are endured, and (c) the resources of the family. These factors appear to be equally applicable to families of POW's. However, there were inconsistent findings as to those specific factors which may be the best predictors of family functioning. Inconsistencies were found between separate POW family studies, as well as between POW and non-POW family studies.

An interesting conflict in the literature is the finding by Hill (1949) that one of the successful coping patterns employed by families of war-separated husbands/fathers was one that tried to include the husband/father in family decisions via mail and actively thinking about what he would want family members to do, thereby effectively keeping intact his position and function within the family system. This style of coping seems very close to PFP, which was connected in one study with poor functioning on the part of the wife. A critical difference may be that with war separated families there was actual communication with the husband/father, and unlike PFP their attempt to keep his place in the family intact was reality-oriented. Furthermore, the

husband/father's absence was not indefinite in length, as was the case with POWs. Therefore, the stress of giving such a vital family role to someone who was not present may have been more tolerable because of the knowledge that he would return at some definite point in time. This again underscores the possibility that there may be significant differences in how a family copes with a spousal/parental absence depending on the type of separation encountered.

Future Research. In addition to the other issues that have been addressed (i.e., the effect of rank and military branch on coping with separations), future research should investigate the effects of the absence of the wife/mother upon the family, since the number of women choosing to make military service their career choice has increased over the years. It should not be assumed that the husband/father separation data can be simply and indiscriminately applied to instances where the wife/mother is the absent family member (Kulka et al., 1990). With the ending of Operation Desert Storm, it should be interesting to monitor the forthcoming research literature and to see what the data suggests about the psychological effects of wife/mother separation upon the family.

In general, however, this and other research on the military family should continue to be conducted with appropriate refinements in research design and methods. There has been an increased acknowledgment of the correlation between how well the military person performs his/her job and the quality of his/her family life. Continued research will both benefit the military through finding ways to have more efficiently functioning personnel, and the military family

through finding ways to assure having a more functional, happier and more satisfying home life during the time of the husband/father's absence.

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